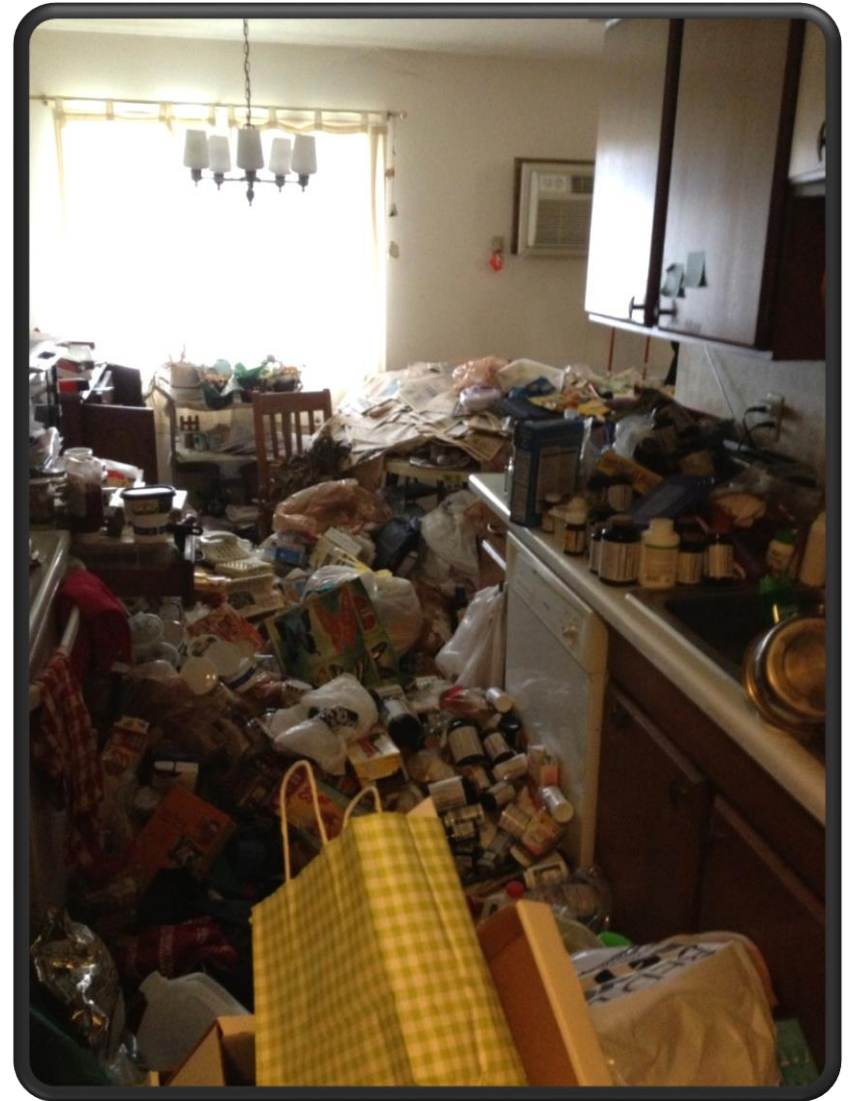
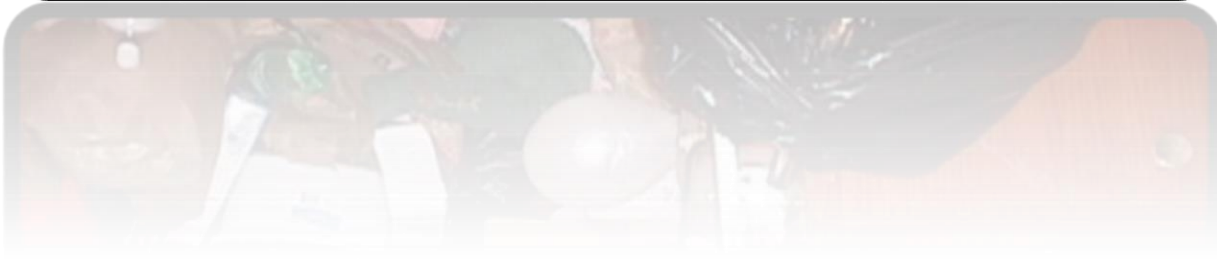


# The Safety Implications of Hoarding As Seen Through the Eyes of the Fire Service





“The fundamental characteristics of compulsive hoarding can also lead to a host of related problems, including unorthodox use of utilities”.



# Accumulation of Combustible Material



What does this mean for the resident?

Could this pose an problem exiting?

Are there 2 ways out in case of a fire?

Could someone become trapped in a situation like this?

What happens when a person needs medical help?

# Accumulation of Combustible Material

What does this mean for the fire service?

During a call  
for medical  
help?

- Difficult to access patient
- Providing necessary care can be affected
- Removing the patient may be difficult
  - Little to no space for a cot
  - Trip hazards exist

During a  
fire?

- Increased fire load means a larger, more difficult fire to extinguish.
- Increased stress on the structure due to weight of combustible materials and weight of water from firefighting leads to increased risk of structural failure.
- Firefighters may be hurt, trapped or even killed!
- Rescue efforts are drastically hindered
  - Finding occupants
  - Removing occupants

## What Can Be Done?



### Inside:

- Reduce accumulation of combustible material
- Maintain 3' clearance around heating appliances and anything that creates heat such as lamps, water heaters, and cooking appliances.
- Have 2 accessible ways to exit every room
- Eliminate trip hazards
- Have clear paths (3' widths recommended)

### Outside:

- Reduce accumulation of combustible material.
- Make sure your residence is accessible to emergency personnel.

# Extension cords

Why are extension cords and multi-plug adapters used?



What does this mean for residents and firefighters alike?

- Increased trip hazard
- Improper use leads to increased fire risk
  - Not intended to be permanent wiring
  - CAN NOT be used with appliances including portable heaters!
  - Running through doorways, under rugs etc

# Sources of Ignition

Ways in which we heat the home and what potential hazards are created?

- Baseboard heaters
- Space heaters
- Fireplaces
- What else might people use to try to heat their home?
  - Are there issues with using an oven to heat a space?

*Using an oven for space heating is a fire hazard.*

*Ovens are not designed to heat spaces beyond their oven enclosure.*

*Operating an oven, or any appliance, not in accordance with manufacturers instructions could result in a fire.*



# How Can We Help Make Homes Safer?

## **Extension Cords:**

Extension cords are for temporary use only and never meant to be used permanently.

Reduce or eliminate extension cords or multi-tap adapters.

Only use trippable/surge protected devices (that are listed for the intended use) if you need more areas to plug in items.

Do not run extension cords under rugs or through door ways.

Keep them away from areas of travel to reduce trip hazards.

## **Heaters and Other Heat Producing Appliances:**

Follow manufacturers recommendations for use.

*Maintain a 3' clearance around heat producing appliances such as baseboard heaters, portable heaters, water heaters, furnaces, fire places, halogen lamps, and heat lamps.*

**ALWAYS** plug appliances directly into the wall, never use an extension cord for an appliance or heating device.

## **Kitchen:**

Only use the kitchen for cooking and dining purposes.

An oven is not meant for heating the home, this is a fire hazard.

Maintain a 3' space around cooking appliances.

Do not place anything other than pots/pans on your stove top or inside your oven.

Keep combustible items that may be on your counter a safe distance away so that they can not fall onto your stovetop.



## **Candles:**

Never leave a burning candle unattended.

Always extinguish a candle before leaving a room.

Keep combustibles 3' or more away from candles.

Keep pets away from candles.

## **Smoking:**

Fully extinguish smoking materials every time!

Smoke outside in “designated” areas.

*NEVER* smoke while using medical oxygen or in the vicinity of medical oxygen, it can intensify the fire.

*ALWAYS* make sure smoking materials are cool to the touch prior to discarding.

*ONLY* use deep, sturdy non-combustible receptacles such as a metal can filled with sand.

***NEVER*** use planters or pots containing potting soil and peat moss as a receptacle.

Keep smoking receptacles away from anything that can burn.

*NEVER* extinguish smoking materials directly into the trash or upon vegetation.

*Soak smoking materials and ash in water prior to placing in the trash.*

## Doors and Windows:

Doors and windows are all ways out of an area, make sure you can get to them easily when the power is out.

Have and practice a home escape plan.

Always have 2 accessible ways to exit each room in case of an emergency.

Make sure windows are not painted, nailed, or barred shut and that everyone in the home can operate them.

## Fire Sprinklers:

Fire sprinklers save lives and protect property.

Properly installed and maintained fire sprinklers will automatically protect a home 24 hours a day.

If a fire starts only the fire sprinkler(s) closest to the fire activates to help control the fire giving the family time to evacuate. According to [firesprinklerinitiative.org](http://firesprinklerinitiative.org) “Nearly **85 percent** of the time only one sprinkler activates during a fire”.

A majority of fire deaths occur within the home.

“If you have a reported fire in your home, the risk of dying decreases by about 80 percent when sprinklers are present”.

<http://homefiresprinkler.org>

Often times the fire sprinklers will extinguish the flames, saving property, prior to the fire department arrival.



## **Smoke Alarms:**

A smoke alarm is your notification of a fire. The sooner people become aware of a fire, the sooner they can begin to evacuate to a safe location outside of the home.

Once outside, stay outside and call 911. NEVER go back into a building until the Fire Department tells you it is safe to do so.

Test your smoke alarms monthly to be sure they are functioning.

Replace batteries twice a year, or more often if they indicate a new battery is required.

The life expectancy of a smoke alarm is 10 years. Replace your smoke alarm if it is 10 years old or older.

Where should they be located:

- In every bedroom or sleeping area
- Outside of every bedroom
- On every level

## **Carbon Monoxide Alarms:**

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, poisonous gas that is caused by incomplete combustion of various fuels such as coal, wood, charcoal, oil, kerosene, propane, and natural gas.

If your home contains a fuel burning appliance, a CO alarm will alert to an elevated presence of CO.

CO alarms should be placed outside sleeping areas and on each level.

Test CO alarms monthly.

Follow manufacturers' instructions for battery and alarm replacement. Typically CO alarms have a life expectancy of 7 years.

IF your CO alarm activates, exit the building to fresh air and call 911. Do not re-enter the home until told to do so by either the fire department or a service professional.

The symptoms of CO poisoning include:

- Headache
- Fatigue
- Shortness of Breath
- Dizziness
- Mental Confusion
- Vomiting
- Loss of Muscular Coordination
- Loss of Consciousness
- Death

**If you have any questions  
regarding fire safety or fire  
hazards call your local fire  
department.**